

Department of Psychology

August 15, 1968

George A. Carver, Jr.
Central Intelligence Agency
Langley, Virginia

Dear Mr. Carver:

There is still a great gap in public discussion of ways of getting out of the Vietnam war, and getting out honorably. There has been little or no public consideration of a strong, large-area holding policy, as an alternative clearly distinguished from Gen. Gavin's enclave proposal.

A specific proposal of this sort is spelled out in my book, just published, entitled NOBODY WANTED WAR: Misperception in Vietnam and Other Wars. The publishers, Doubleday and Co., tell me they have sent you a copy. (If you didn't get it, please let me know.) If you don't read any of the rest of the book I hope you read pp. 291-311, in which the large-area holding policy is discussed. Since I gather from the newspapers that your testimony had quite an impact on President Johnson in March, I would hope that now you could at least see to it that this alternative is seriously considered on the highest level.

The case for a large-area holding policy seems to me so compelling that the absence of public discussion of it is puzzling. Pared to essentials, the case includes these points:

1) Unlike Gen. Gavin's enclave proposal, it would be militarily feasible. It would avoid the quite valid military objection raised against small enclaves -- that they would be unduly vulnerable to mortar fire, rockets and infiltration.

2) Unlike a pull-out, it would achieve the two most essential objectives of our fighting in Vietnam, which (to me) are protection of our friends and prevention of a domino process (broadly defined) elsewhere.



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3) Unlike a policy aiming at military victory in the South, it could be achieved without a politically impossible number of American troops.

4) Unlike a coalition government, it would not expect mortal enemies to cooperate amicably with each other; and, unlike a coalition government, it could be done even if the Paris talks get nowhere. It could be done on our own initiative, without waiting for the Communists to agree to it and without trusting them in any way. It is our ace in the hole if the Paris talks fail.

The book contains several other things that are relevant to what our policy ought to be. For instance, Chapter II, "The Conflict as Seen by the South Vietnamese," is a more systematic and factual treatment of that problem than I have seen elsewhere. Evidence on both sides is examined in some detail, including for example the CBS survey. Its main conclusions -- that probably some 20% of the South Vietnamese are emotionally committed to the Viet Cong side, with some 10% similarly committed on the side of Saigon and perhaps 70% relatively indifferent -- has a bearing on any proposals about what can and should be done now. But the one part of the book that deals directly with our present impasse, and suggests a way out that does not yet seem to have been seriously considered, is the part about a large-area holding policy.

The possibility that the last best chance of reaching an honorable peace may be disappearing, simply because the responsible people are not thinking or talking about it, is very disturbing.

Sincerely yours,

Ralph K. White

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Professor, Social Psychology

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